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Mexico

Livestock and Products

Mexico Publishes Official Rule on Health Specifications for Slaughtering Plants, Distribution, Transport and Sales Outlets for Meat Products - Revised

2004

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Report Highlights:

On September 18, 2004, Mexico's Secretariat of Health published the final regulation governing sampling and testing of domestic and imported meats. The rule establishes procedures for testing along all stages of the marketing chain and will broaden the Secretariat of Health's regulation of the meat industry. The regulation will go into effect during September of 2005. Certain provisions could be problematic and U.S. exporters and their customers may wish to familiarize themselves with the requirements of the regulation.

Includes PSD Changes: No

Includes Trade Matrix: No

Unscheduled Report

Mexico [MX1]

[MX]

Introduction: This report summarizes the final rule Mexico's Secretariat of Health (SSA) published in the "*Diario Oficial*" (Federal Register) on September 18, 2004.

Disclaimer: This summary is based on a *cursory* review of the subject announcement and therefore should not, under any circumstances, be viewed as a definitive reading of the regulation in question, or of its implications for U.S. agricultural export trade interests. In the event of a discrepancy or discrepancies between this summary and the complete regulation or announcement as published in Spanish, the latter shall prevail.

Title: SSA published the final rule NOM-194-SSA1-2004 that establishes the health specifications at slaughtering establishments, carcass preparation, storage, transport and sales.

Type of Regulation: Final

Important Dates

1. Publication Date: September 18, 2004.

2. Effective Date: September 19, 2005

FAS/Mexico's Executive Summary: On September 18, 2004, the Secretariat of Health (SSA) published in the *Diario Oficial* (Federal Register) the final regulation that establishes the health specifications for slaughtering establishments, carcass preparation, storage, transport and sales of meat and meat products. It also establishes the specifications that these products must have, and the test methods that should be used to demonstrate compliance with the requirements established in the regulation. Compliance with this regulation is mandatory for all persons or entities involved in processing, importing, or selling meat and meat products. This regulation applies throughout the country of Mexico. Some of the requirements could be problematic for both imported and domestically produced meat.

Products Affected: All meat and meat products of all species.

Important Features of the Regulation:

Other Mexican Official Norms that will be used to enforce this NOM:

NOM-033-ZOO-1995 Humane slaughter of domestic and wild animals

NOM-113-SSA1-1994 Goods and Services. Method for microorganisms total plate count.

NOM-114-SSAI-1994 Determination methods for Salmonella in foods.

NOM-120-SSAI-1994 Sanitation and hygiene practices in processing foods, non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages.

NOM-127-SSA1-1994 Ambient health, water for human use and consumption. Permissible limits of quality and treatment for water to be considered potable.

NOM-145-SSA1-1995 Goods and services. Meat products cut and cured. Meat products cured and matured. Sanitary specifications.

NOM-201-SSA1-2000 Goods and services. Water and ice for human consumption, bulk packed. Sanitary specifications.

Health Provisions:

Domestic and imported products covered under this NOM must comply with the described specifications in the NOMs listed above, along with the NOM-194 specifications relating to microbiological specifications, additives, and heavy metals contamination.

NOM-194 also establishes that foreign matter is not permitted in meat. Foreign matter is defined as: All material, residues, organic or inorganic waste or debris that is present in the product by contamination and/or non-hygienic handling of the product during its processing. Feces, hair of any species, pieces or fragments of bone and insects that are dangerous to public health are considered as foreign matter.

Specifications:

Parasites:

Specifications	Maximum Limit	Species
Cysticercus	Absent	Porcine
Hydatidinous cyst	Absent	Bovines and Ovines
<i>Trichinella spiralis</i> (*)	Absent	Porcines and Equines
Bovis cysticercus	Absent	Bovines

In viscera:

Specifications	Maximum Limit	Species
<i>Cysticercus cellulosae</i>	Absent	Porcine
Hydatidinous cyst	Absent	Bovines and Ovines
Trematodes	Absent	Bovines and Ovines
Other cestodes and nematodes	Absent	Mammals

Microbiologicals: In mammals and fowl:

Product	E.coli* CFU/g Maximum Limit	Salmonella in 25 g
Frozen	Not applicable	Absent
Chilled	1000	Absent
Chilled ground meat	5000	Absent
Vacumn packed or in modified atmosphere	Not applicable	Absent

*As microorganism indicator

Contaminants:

Bovine products must be absent of traces of clenbuterol.

Sampling of products must be performed in accordance to the regulations specified in this NOM and the applicable referenced NOMs.

Test Method:

Testing of products must be performed in accordance with the regulations specified in this NOM and the applicable referenced NOMs.

Verification of physical and chemical specifications under this regulation must be done according to provisions of this NOM and the referenced NOMs.

Labeling:

In addition to the provisions of the specific NOM for labeling, NOM-051-SCFI-1994, processed meat products under this proposed NOM must also comply with the regulations specified in the applicable referenced NOMs.

Packing and Wrapping:

Container: Products under this NOM will be packed in sanitary containers made of stable materials resistant to change during processing, so that products do not react or change their chemical or physical characteristics.

Packaging: Resistant materials will be used to offer adequate protection for containers and prevent external damage, while providing ease in handling, storage and distribution.

Analysis:

SSA Testing Program: This NOM sets a tolerance of zero for salmonella in a 25-gram sample of frozen, refrigerated, or vacuum packed meat from birds or mammals. This standard is based on the following references according to Government of Mexico officials.

ISO 6579. 1990. Microbiology-General guidance on methods for detection of salmonella. International Organization for Standardization. Second edition.

Official Methods of Analysis. Association of Official Analytical Chemists (AOAC). 1990. Vol. I. 15th. Edition, USA. pp. 467-492

The provisions of the NOM will apply to both the domestic and imported meat marketing chains from processing plants to points of sale. While the NOM makes no mention of sampling imported meat at the border, government officials indicate that the sampling of meat at the border falls under the broader authority of the General Health Law, which is referenced in this NOM. It's not yet clear if SSA will have inspectors at the border to complement inspections that are currently undertaken by the Secretariat of Agriculture. Currently, SSA has a limited number of inspectors along the border who inspect a large number of food products.

SSA procedures state that three samples should be taken, one for SSA laboratories, one for the importer to test, and one for the importer to hold in the event of a difference between the first two test results. Any positive laboratory results from samples taken at the border or at the warehouse/sales points will initiate an investigation to determinate the origin and/or cause of the deficiency. If the investigation result indicates the problem was due to plant deficiencies, fines could be levied or possible legal action initiated.

With this NOM, SSA appears to be broadening its role over the regulation and inspection of meat and meat products. This regulation not only focuses on inspection of raw meat but also on cooked and processed meats. Increased oversight by SSA, coupled with a zero tolerance

for Salmonella in uncooked meats could lead to an increase in the number of recalls of both domestic and imported meats.

For More Information:

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A machine translation of this regulation is available upon request.

Internet Connections

FAS Mexico Web Site: We are available at <http://www.fas-la.com/mexico> or visit our headquarter home page at <http://www.fas.usda.gov> for a complete selection of FAS' worldwide agricultural reporting.

Useful Mexican Web Sites: Mexico's equivalent of the Department of Agriculture (SAGARPA) can be found at www.sagarpa.gob.mx and Mexico's equivalent of the Department of Commerce (SE) can be found at www.se.gob.mx These web sites are mentioned for the readers' convenience but USDA does NOT in any way endorse, guarantee the accuracy of, or necessarily concur with the information contained on the mentioned sites.